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ABSTRACT

Noting that efforts of governments to control newspapers are more problematic where news photographs are concerned, a study compared the news photos printed in an English-language Argentinian newspaper during and after a period of totalitarian rule. The study sample was a simulated "week" of issues, consisting of one day from each month for the first seven months of 1981 and 1985. (Argentine democracy was resorted in 1983). Photographs from each issue were categorized by source and by content. To determine content, two categories were used: photographs considered politically sensitive, such as pictures of political or governmental activity, and "all others," which included spot news, mug shots, and public relations photographs. The results indicated notable differences in the types of photographs published, depending on the government under which the paper was operating. The photo sources indicated an editorial move away from substantial reliance on photos of people and events outside of Argentina (Reuters News Service) toward the use of domestic Argentinian news photos by two Argentine news services once democracy was restored. The cross tabulation of photos by content under the two governments was equally interesting, but less clearly defined. A rather small number of photos was judged politically sensitive in the samples from both governments, but the use of politically sensitive photos doubled under democratic rule. (HTH)

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IMAGES OF DEMOCRACY:
An Analysis of Photos Published During and After Argentine Military Rule

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Print media have existed in uneasy relationships with governments for centuries, and those relationships have inspired much notable commentary. Recent technological advances, however, require that the discussion be taken beyond print text forms, to areas involving the increasingly visual media of the modern world.

For most of history, of course, the press existed as verbal, print media and government attempts to control the press meant activities that involved muzzling the printed word. Pool[1] and Hachten[2] list characteristics of authoritarian regimes: rigidly controlled propaganda, censorship, removal of editorial staffs and/or outright government takeover of press operations, limited public access to the press, and various forms of terror.

The intended result, in historical schemes, was elimination of offending words, phrases and ultimately ideas. Some subjects were simply not discussed. Explains Hachten, in his description of Ghana's press in the 1970s:

> The press prints no direct criticism of the leadership and little dissent. Rarely is a word carried that can be construed as derogatory of (the government leadership). Criticism is muted and indirect, as in an occasional letter to the editor or a seemingly innocuous news story that may indirectly suggest government inefficiency or corruption."[3]

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However, control of visual imagery is not so easily achieved. Images communicate in more subtle, holistic fashion, rather than by linear, word-by-word communication. Different criteria must be employed for control of visual imagery, unless governments institute the draconian alternative of eliminating news presented pictorially. Such a tactic has been used by the South African government to deal with foreign press covering that country's internal struggles.[4]

This paper reports on a comparison of news photos printed in the Buenos Aires, Argentina, Herald during and after a period of totalitarian rule. The Argentine experience represents an excellent subject for a study of this type: Argentina was governed by its military most recently from 1976 to 1983, after which democracy was restored. Under President Raúl Alfonsín freedoms of speech and of the press continue to the present. Argentina's return to democratic rule has, in fact, proved to be a model for several other Latin American countries which have reconstituted democratic governments.

In addition, Argentina's society and level of culture allow interesting comparisons with European and North American systems. Argentina has a large and influential middle class, a diverse economy including substantial industrialization and one of the world's most productive agricultural systems. The country's literacy rate is 94 percent.[5]

The 10 million residents of Argentina's capital city, Buenos Aires, represent about one-third of the entire country's population, and place the city among the world's most populous. It is a thriving, busy cosmopolitan center of commerce and politics,

and as such it is served by numerous newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations.

Chief among the newspapers are La Nación, La Prensa, La Razón, Clarín, and La Crónica, which together have a combined circulation of about 3 million. There is, in addition, the German-language newspaper Argentinisches Tageblatt for the German community, L' Italia del Popolos for the sizeable Italian community, and the Buenos Aires Herald, which serves the English-speaking community of British and Americans.

The Herald was chosen for this study largely because it is the English-language newspaper of Buenos Aires. It is a seven-day daily with a circulation of about 16,000, but according to Managing Editor Ronald Hansen, the paper is more influential than its size would indicate because its British and American audience wields substantial power in Buenos Aires.[6]

The editors of the Herald describe the publication as "editorially agressive," espousing an economically conservative but politically liberal philosophy. During Argentine military rule, the Herald's criticism of the ruling junta provoked potentially lethal response. Following death threats, Editor James Cox hurriedly left the country in 1979.

Brutal response to criticism was characteristic of the Argentine military rule during the 1976-'83 period. In what has become known as its "Dirty War" against suspected subversives, thousands of persons, including scores of journalists, were arrested, jailed, tortured or simply disappeared.[7]

This study was an examination of the photographs printed in the Buenos Aires Herald during that period, and during the democracy

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which was subsequently instituted in Argentina. It was hypothesized that analysis of the photographs in samples of the Herald would indicate some of the ways in which control of the press under a totalitarian regime manifests itself in visual communication forms.

Content analysis has been an effective tool in several studies of photographic content. Singletary[8] reviewed page-one photographs in American daily newspapers in order to study trends in photo use over a 40-year period; Miller[9] reviewed issues of the Washington Post and Los Angeles Times in order to study portrayals of the roles of men and women pictured. Sentman[10] reviewed a sample of Life magazine issues during its 35-year history to analyze its coverage of blacks in America.

Based on this literature, it was apparent analysis of the government's impact on Buenos Aires Herald photography could include a review of the content of the photographs. In addition, the Singletary study suggested source of photographs would be a useful subject for analysis.

METHOD

The Herald is of tabloid size, and averages about 20 pages per day. The study sample was a simulated "week" of issues, consisting of one day from each month for the first seven months of two years. Thus, Sunday issues were taken from January, Monday issues from February and so forth.

The samples were taken from 1981 and 1985. Argentine democracy was restored in the fall of 1983, and because 1984 was a period of return to conditions of a free press, no sample issues were

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drawn from that year. An equal period prior to fall 1983 would have yielded a sample heavy with coverage of the Malvinas/Falklands war with Britain, with its atypical news and photo content, so the sample of papers published during military rule was taken from early 1981.

Photographs from each issue were categorized by content and source of the photo. Sports photographs and non-photographic illustrations (such as editorial cartoons) were not included in the sample.

While source of the photographs was relatively easy to determine using photo credits in the captions, content of photos was less categorical. The content of news photographs can be, of course, without limit. For purposes of this analysis, however, two categories were required: photos which could be politically sensitive (such as pictures of political or governmental activity) and all others (which would include spot news, mug shots, and public relations photos). For purposes of this study, the criteria for "politically sensitive" was established as the following content: government personalities; statutory or scheduled government activity (i.e. parliament in session); unscheduled government activity (i.e. police or internal military activity); political opponents, such as members of opposing political parties or groups; and opposition activities.

Coding of the sample's 1981 photographs was reviewed by an Argentine citizen to confirm coder reliability and the lack of cultural bias. Coding agreement was 98 percent.

The 14 issues of the Herald reviewed yielded a sample of 118 photographs. The 1981 sample included 62 non-sports pictures, while the

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1985 sample included 56 non-sports photogaphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed the Herald in 1981 and 1985 used photographs from seven sources: Herald staff photographers; the news service Noticias Argentinas (NA); the news service Diarios y Noticias (DYN); public relations photos; Reuters; and unidentified and/or Herald file photos. It is important to note the Argentine news service DYN was established only three years ago, so the domestic news services were tabulated as one source.

The Herald's use of photos, by source, formed the following breakdown: (Table A)

Source	Military government (1981)		Democratic gov't (1985)	
	Amount	% of '81 sample	Amount	% of '85 sample
Herald staff	8	12.9%	12	21.4%
DYN/NA	3	4.8	10	17.9
PR	12	19.4	18	32.1
Reuters	37	59.7	14	25
Herald file	2	3.2	2	3.6
Totals	62	100	56	100

Analysis of the content of Herald photos was greatly simplified by reducing the total to the two categories, politically sensitive images and all others. These categories were arrayed by the conditions of Argentine government at the time of their publication, i.e. under military government or under democratic government. The result was a 2 x 2 arrangement. (Table B)

Both sets of data indicate notable differences in the types of photographs published, depending on the government under which the Herald was operating.

Table B

	Military gov't (1981)		Democ. gov't (1985)	
Not politically sensitive	57	(91.9% of '81 sample)	46	(82.1% of '85 sample)
Politically sensitive	5	(8.1%)	10	(17.9%)
Totals	62	(100%)	56	(100%)

Analysis of the sources of photos published shows a substantial increase in the number of news service photographs published after the return of democracy, an increase of from three (or 4.8 percent of the total sample from 1981) to 10 (17.9 percent of the 1985 sample. At the same time, however, there was a corresponding drop in the number of Reuters photos printed, from 37 (representing 59.7 percent of the 1981 sample) to 14 (25 percent of the 1985 sample.)

Indeed, the array of figures appears to illustrate an editorial move away from substantial reliance on photos of people and events outside of Argentina, to use of the domestic Argentine news photos provided by NA and DYN in conjunction with a more balanced slate of sources.

The cross tabulation of photos by content under differing forms of government is equally interesting but less clearly defined, because of the necessity of categorizing the content of photos. The subtle nature of photographic content comes into play here: is a photo of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges to be included as "politically sensitive" because his writings have been critical of military rule? (Coders judged it was not, because at the time of the photo's publication, in 1981, Borges's later criticism of

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the Malvinas/Falklands War was not applicable.) On the other hand, should a photo of the Argentine interior minister (a general) enroute to his private ranch and changing planes at the Buenos Aires airport, be included as "sensitive"? (Coders differed on this photo.)

The resulting cross tabulation does, however, present some notable observations. A rather small number of photos was judged politically sensitive in the samples from both conditions of government. This would be expected in any general-circulation newspaper, particularly one of size as limited as the Herald.

However, evaluation of the number of politically sensitive photos by percentages of the total from each year's sample shows a notable difference. Use of politically sensitive photographs doubled from the sample published during military rule to the sample published under democratic government, rising from 8.1 percent of the 1981 sample to 17.9 percent of the 1985 sample. Although this array was not quantitatively significant (the X^2 test of statistical significance was applied, with $X^2=1.74$, $p=<.07$), the substantial increase in number of politically sensitive photos in this small sample strongly indicates a larger sample might yield statistically significant differences.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the photographic content of the Buenos Aires Herald indicates conditions of repressive totalitarian rule have an effect on both the source and content of photographs published. These results tend to support the stated hypothesis.

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It is noteworthy that even in such a small publication, which by the admission of its editors does not feature photographic communication, the stifling effect of totalitarian rule is evident.

Herald editors were clear in their understanding of the situations under which they worked. According to managing editor Hansen, photographs which depicted scenes of dissent and internal strife during the period of military rule were difficult to obtain. "Police were often reluctant to allow photos of street demonstrations," he said. "The horrible things--dead bodies, and so forth--couldn't be photographed."[11]

Dan Newland, an American who was news editor of the Herald for five years during the period of military rule, noted the understatement of Hansen's remarks. "The photographers were constrained with nightsticks," he remarked. "The photographers were the most constrained. Reporters can work from memory. Photographers' equipment is visible. They were beaten up."[12]

Additional pressure was applied to editors in more subtle forms, Hansen and Newland explained. They said offending editors typically would be called into the government offices for lectures on cooperation. The military outwardly professed freedom of the press, and the law they cited dated from the democratic Peronist rule immediately prior to the military takeover in 1976, according to Newland. But the message was clear enough--the Herald's top three editors hired guards for their offices and homes.

The resulting publication reflected this influence. As confirmed by the tabulations, editors turned to wire service photos of world events and innocuous PR photos. Real visual

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coverage of domestic political events and personalities was as stifled as dissenting verbal text.

The effect on overall communication is evident. Explained Robert W. Sarnoff of the television network NBC, "The ultimate decisions on what the public sees can come only from the public itself, as long as it is free to watch or not watch as it pleases."[13]

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Footnotes

1 Ithiel de Sola Pool, "Communication in Totalitarian Societies," in Pool and Wilbur Schramm, eds., Handbook of Communication, Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973, pp.465-7.

2 William A. Hachten, "Ghana's Press Under the NRC: An Authoritarian Model for Africa," Journalism Quarterly, 52:459-61 (Autumn 1975).

3 Hachten, p. 460.

4 Jonathan Alter, "The Acid Test for TV," Newsweek Nov. 18, 1985, p. 80.

5 The World Fact Book, Nineteen Eighty Five, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C., p. 9.

6 Interview with Ronald Hansen, Dec. 20, 1985, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

7 Louisa Valenzuela, "A Legacy of Poets and Cannibals: Literature Revives in Argentina," New York Times Book Review, March 16, 1986, pp. 3, 37.

8 Michael W. Singletary, "Newspaper Photographs: A Content Analysis 1936-'76," Journalism Quarterly, 55: 585-89 (Autumn, 1978).

9 Susan H. Miller, "The Content of News Photos: Women's and Men's Roles," Journalism Quarterly, 52:70-75 (Spring 1975).

10 Mary Alice Sentman, "Black and White: Disparity in Coverage by Life Magazine from 1937 to 1972,"Journalism Quarterly 501-08 (Autumn 1983)

11 Hansen interview.

12 Interview with Dan Newland, Dec. 20, 1985, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

13 Robert W. Sarnoff, "Two Advocates Break the Silence," in Herbert W. Hildebrandt, Issues of Our Time, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1963, p. 142.

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